

READING TIP

STUDY SKILLS: Facts and opinions

It is important to understand the difference between facts [things we know are true] and opinions [what people think]. Both facts and opinions are useful, but facts tell us something that has been counted or measured, so may be more reliable.

This Reading Worksheet is about facts and opinions. When you are reading and using academic texts, it is important to understand the difference. The tasks below will help you to do this.

Practice

1 You are going to read a text and see if you can separate the facts from the writer's opinion. Before you read, discuss your ideas as a class.

2  In pairs, discuss how you can see the differences between facts and opinions in a reading text.

Make some notes here to help you remember.


3 Read the text below, which is from the Faculty of Arts, and look at the highlighted sections. Mark them as fact (F) or opinion (O).

Who's the best?

In literature and art, it's always difficult to decide who is the best. William Shakespeare was a British playwright and is generally considered to be one of the finest writers ever, but not everyone agrees. People in Italy might say it's Dante, who was from the city of Florence. In France or Germany or Latin America they might suggest different people. It's the same with films: some people say the director Alfred Hitchcock, who was British, was the best; others will say the Italian Federico Fellini; and of course, there are many great directors from the US.

Music is also a difficult thing to judge. Who's the best singer or the best composer? Many people say the best music comes from the UK, but that may just be because the English language makes the music easier to listen to. It's impossible to judge and is perhaps just a personal thing.

4  Compare your answers to Exercise 3 with your partner. Are they the same? Discuss any differences.

5  With your partner, write down a list of how you decided if the statements in the text in Exercise 3 were fact or opinion. What did you look for?

- 6** Discuss your list from Exercise 5 with the class.
- 7** If you had to give five tips on separating facts and opinions, what would they be?
Write them here and add some examples if you can.

Reflect

- 8** Have you ever had to separate fact and opinion in a text? Think about how you did it.
Make some notes here as a reminder.
